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SUBJECT: ISRAELI MILITARY BRIEFS UN ON HIZBALLAH REARMAMENT

CLASSIFIED BY: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES ALEJANDRO D. WOLFF FOR REASONS 1.4 (B)
AND (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY: ON MARCH 1 ISRAELI BRIGADIER GENERAL YOSSI BAIDATZ BRIEFED THE UN AND SELECTED DELEGATIONS, INCLUDING MEMBERS OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL AND TROOP CONTRIBUTING COUNTRIES TO UNIFIL, ABOUT REARMAMENT OF HIZBALLAH. USING AERIAL IMAGERY AND CITING "HUNDREDS" OF TRUCK MOVEMENTS SINCE AUGUST 2006, BAIDATZ REPORTED THAT ISRAEL HAS CONCLUDED THAT TWO TYPES OF VIOLATIONS OF UNSCR 1701 ARE OCCURRING: UNAUTHORIZED ARMS FLOW FROM OUTSIDE LEBANON, AND UNAUTHORIZED TRANSFER OF ARMS WITHIN LEBANON TO THE AREA BETWEEN THE LITANI RIVER AND THE BLUE LINE. HE STATED THAT IRAN AND SYRIA ARE THE SOURCE OF THE UNAUTHORIZED ARMS (AND IN A BILATERAL CONVERSATION WITH THE RUSSIAN MISSION, HE RAISED ISRAELI CONCERNS ABOUT RUSSIAN ARMS SALES TO SYRIA). HE ALSO REPORTED THAT THE IDF HAS SHARED WITH UNIFIL THE LOCATIONS OF 20 SITES SOUTH OF THE LITANI WHICH ISRAEL BELIEVES ARE "CLOSED OFF" TO UNIFIL AND THE LAF. BAIDATZ CONCLUDED, HOWEVER, THAT THERE HAS BEEN A "DRAMATIC CHANGE" AND "GREAT PROGRESS" SINCE THE ADOPTION OF UNSCR 1701. HIZBALLAH IS NO LONGER THE "LORD OF THE SOUTH," THE LAF IS ENGAGED IN A HISTORIC DEPLOYMENT ALONG THE BLUE LINE, UNIFIL HAS THE MOTIVATION TO ACT, AND THE RESOLUTION HAS ESTABLISHED A VALUABLE "PROCESS" TO REIGN IN HIZBALLAH. HE AGREED THAT UNSCR 1701 AUTHORIZES UNIFIL TO ACT IN SUPPORT OF THE LAF, BUT SAID DUE TO INTERNAL POLITICAL PRESSURE THE LAF OFTEN "CLOSES ONE EYE" TO HIZBALLAH ACTIVITIES. THE UPSHOT IS THAT HIZBALLAH HAS "THOUSANDS" OF MISSILES AND "HUNDREDS" OF ANTI-TANK MINES, AND THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN LEBANON AND THE REGION IS VOLATILE. COLLEAGUES AT THE UN, RUSSIAN AND FRENCH MISSIONS TOLD USUN THAT THE DETAILED, INFORMED AND BALANCED PRESENTATION BY BAIDATZ WAS CREDIBLE AND PERSUASIVE.
END SUMMARY.

FULL SCHEDULE OF BRIEFINGS

12. (C) IN ORDER TO SUBSTANTIATE CLAIMS OF HIZBALLAH REARMAMENT, THE ISRAELI MISSION ARRANGED FOR BG BAIDATZ TO VISIT NEW YORK (BAIDATZ IS THE LEAD DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE FOR THE IDF). HE MET WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UN'S DEPARTMENTS OF PEACEKEEPING AND POLITICAL AFFAIRS; UN SPECIAL ENVOY TERJE LARSEN; COLLECTIVELY WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE P-5, INCLUDING AMB SANDERS; AND BILATERALLY WITH THE RUSSIANS, ITALIANS, SPANISH, QATARIS, AND AMB WOLFF. (DUE TO SCHEDULING CONFLICTS HE WAS UNABLE TO MEET WITH THE INDONESIAN AND BELGIAN DELEGATIONS.) HE DELIVERED THE SAME POWERPOINT PRESENTATION WITH AERIAL IMAGERY TO ALL, ALTHOUGH HE WAS MORE FORTHCOMING IN SELECTED BILATERAL MEETINGS. (THE ISRAELI MISSION ADVISED USUN THAT HIS PRESENTATION WAS A SANITIZED VERSION OF THE BRIEFING HE DELIVERED EARLIER TO SECRETARY RICE.)

ARMS SMUGGLING ACROSS THE SYRIAN-LEBANESE BORDER

13. (C) BAIDATZ BEGAN BY DESCRIBING THE BASIS FOR ISRAEL'S CONCLUSION THAT UNSCR 1701 IS BEING VIOLATED BY UNAUTHORIZED ARMS FLOW FROM OUTSIDE LEBANON. TO ILLUSTRATE THE FIRST SET OF VIOLATIONS, BAIDATZ SHARED AERIAL IMAGERY FROM AN INCIDENT IN JANUARY. PRIOR TO THE WAR, HE EXPLAINED, HIZBALLAH HAD OPENLY TRANSPORTED ARMS ACROSS THE BORDER AT THE FOUR OFFICIAL BORDER CROSSING POINTS WITH THE ACQUIESCENCE OF THE GOL. SINCE THE WAR, ARMS HAVE BEEN TRANSPORTED THROUGH "TENS" OF INFORMAL CROSSING POINTS USED BY SMUGGLERS. BUT BAIDATZ SAID THE TERM "SMUGGLING" IS INACCURATE, DESCRIBING THE IMPORT OF ARMS AS "WELL-ORGANIZED TRADE" BETWEEN SYRIA AND HIZBALLAH. HE SAID HIZBALLAH PAYS FOR THE ARMS USING FUNDS FROM IRAN.

14. (C) BAIDATZ SAID THAT IRAN AND SYRIA ARE THE TWO SOURCES OF ARMS. IRAN ORGANIZES ARMS TRANSFERS THROUGH THE IRGC-QUDS FORCE LED BY QASSEM SULMANI. A SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO BASHAR AL-ASSAD ORGANIZES THE ARMS TRANSFERS FROM THE SYRIAN ARMY. THE HIZBALLAH OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE FROM THE LEBANESE SIDE IS EMAD MUGNIYAGH. BAIDATZ SAID THE ARMS REACH SYRIA BY LAND VIA TURKEY, BY AIR, AND THROUGH SYRIAN PORTS. HE SAID THE IDF JUDGES THAT THERE IS NO SIGNIFICANT TRAFFICKING THROUGH LEBANESE PORTS.

15. (C) USING IMAGERY, BAIDATZ PORTRAYED A PROCESS WHEREBY 40-FOOT TRUCKS TRANSPORT ARMS THROUGH SYRIA TO THE BORDER, WHERE THE ARMS ARE TRANSFERRED INTO 20-FOOT TRUCKS AND DELIVERED TO DEPOTS IN THE BEKA'A VALLEY, BEIRUT, AND SOUTHERN LEBANON. HE SAID ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER THE CONVOYS USE A "CLEANER" JEEP. THE CLEANER GUIDES THE CONVEY THROUGH SYRIAN ARMED FORCES ON THE SYRIAN SIDE, AND AVOIDS THE LAF OR PUBLIC EXPOSURE ON THE LEBANESE SIDE.

16. (C) BAIDATZ ALSO SAID THAT SYRIA HAS STOCKPILED AERIAL DEFENSE SYSTEMS ON THE SYRIAN SIDE OF THE BORDER, AS HIZBALLAH RECOGNIZED AFTER LAST SUMMER'S WAR THAT THEY NEEDED AIR DEFENSE CAPABILITIES.

ARMS TRANSFERS WITHIN LEBANON

17. (C) TO ADDRESS THE SECOND SET OF VIOLATIONS OF UNSCR 1701, INVOLVING THE UNAUTHORIZED TRANSFER OF ARMS WITHIN LEBANON TO THE AREA BETWEEN THE LITANI RIVER AND THE BLUE LINE, BAIDATZ SHOWED A MAP AND SELECTED AERIAL IMAGES OF 20 SITES THE IDF CALLS "CLOSED OPERATION AREAS" OR COAS. THESE SITES INCLUDE CAVES, TUNNELS, AND CAMOUFLAGED ROCKET LAUNCHERS. TO ILLUSTRATE THIS POINT HE SHOWED A SERIES OF PHOTOS OF THE SALUKI WADI. HE SAID THE IDF SHARED THIS INFORMATION WITH UNIFIL ONE MONTH AGO (AND WHEN ASKED BY THE BRITISH AND FRENCH HE CLARIFIED THAT THE ISRAELIS HAD ALSO PASSED THIS INFORMATION BILATERALLY TO TCCS). BAIDATZ ALSO REPORTED THAT SOME ARMS TRANSFERS ARE OCCURRING IN THE FRENCH SECTOR, AND STATED THAT CROSSING THE LITANI IS EASY BECAUSE IT IS DRY IN CERTAIN AREAS AT CERTAIN TIMES. IN ADDITION, HE SHOWED PHOTOS WHICH HE SAID INDICATED THAT HIZBALLAH IS REBUILDING POSTS IN THE MIDDLE OF VILLAGES.

18. (C) HE ALSO DISCUSSED THE WIDELY PUBLICIZED FEBRUARY 8TH INCIDENT WHEN THE LAF DETAINED A HIZBALLAH TRUCK OF WEAPONS IN THE DAHR AL-BAIDAR SECTOR OF THE DAMASCUS-BEIRUT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT ROAD. HE EXPLAINED HIS VIEW THAT THE "CLEANER" HAD NOT DONE HIS JOB PROPERLY. BAIDATZ DISTRIBUTED COPIES OF NASRALLAH'S STATEMENTS WHICH HE SAID DEMONSTRATED THAT NASRALLAH JUDGED HIZBALLAH RETAINED THE RIGHT TO REARM. THE RESULT OF "HUNDREDS" OF TRUCKS CARRYING ARMS ACROSS THE BORDER AND SOUTH OF THE LITANI RIVER MEANT THAT HIZBALLAH HAD "THOUSANDS" OF MISSILES OF ALL RANGES (40 KM, 50-70 KM, AND 200 KM), AND "HUNDREDS" OF ANTI-TANK MISSILES, OR HIZBALLAH'S EFFECTIVE REARMAMENT. BAIDATZ CLARIFIED, HOWEVER, THAT THE IDF COULD NOT DETERMINE WHAT QUANTITY OF ARMS HAD BEEN MOVED AFTER THE WAR.

UNIFIL AND THE LAF

¶9. (C) DURING THE P-5 PRESENTATION, THIS PORTION OF THE DISCUSSION (DESCRIBED IN PARAS 7 AND 8) PROMPTED DISCUSSION OF UNIFIL'S ROLE. AGREEING THAT UNIFIL IS NOT AUTHORIZED TO ACT UNILATERALLY BUT IN SUPPORT OF THE LAF, BAIDATZ ADDED THAT IN HIS VIEW THE LAF HAS AN UNWRITTEN AGREEMENT WITH HIZBALLAH "NOT TO EMBARRASS EACH OTHER." IN EXCHANGE FOR HIZBALLAH'S DECISION TO KEEP A LOW PROFILE, THE LAF WILL "CLOSE AN EYE" TO DELIVERIES AND AVOID ENTERING HIZBALLAH AREAS. HE REPORTED THE LAF REASONABLY SAYS IT CANT ENTER LEBANESE HOMES WITHOUT A COURT ORDER, BUT THE COURTS DO NOT ISSUE SUCH ORDERS. NOTING THAT THE LAF IS APPROXIMATELY 40 PERCENT SHIA, BAIDATZ OPINED THAT THE ARMY IS CONFLICTED ABOUT HOW TO PROCEED IN CHALLENGING HIZBALLAH, AND SUGGESTED THE NEED TO STRENGTHEN THE LEBANESE FORCES. HE ALSO EXPLAINED THAT THE IDF HAD NOT SHARED THE INFORMATION ON THE COAS WITH THE LAF BECAUSE THE ISRAELIS RECOGNIZED THE FORCE WAS VULNERABLE TO ACCUSATIONS BY HIZBALLAH THAT THE LAF IS COLLUDING WITH THE "ZIONIST ENEMY." HE WAS COMPLIMENTARY OF THE LAF'S DEPLOYMENT ALONG THE BLUE LINE, AND SUGGESTED THAT THEY DID NOT HAVE ENOUGH TROOPS OR THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT TO GUARD THE LONG BORDER WITH SYRIA, AS WELL.

¶10. (C) ON UNIFIL, BAIDATZ SAID THAT THE NEW UNIFIL FORCE (POST-UNSCR 1701) HAD MOTIVATION, AND UNIFIL HAD MOVED SUCCESSFULLY IN MANY AREAS. BUT THERE ARE MANY OBSTACLES TO IMPLEMENTATION. FOR EXAMPLE, FOLLOWING STEPS (NFI) BY A SPANISH BATTALION, HIZBALLAH HAD LAID BOOBY TRAPS IN RETALIATION. HE CONCLUDED THAT UNSCR 1701 HAD LED TO "GREAT PROGRESS AND MANY ACHIEVEMENTS," INCLUDING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A VALUABLE PROCESS TO REIGN IN HIZBALLAH. HIZBALLAH IS NO LONGER THE "LORD OF THE SOUTH." IN HIS VIEW THE LEBANESE POLITICAL DYNAMIC RENDERED THE QUESTION OF LAF/HIZBALLAH ACTION AGAINST HIZBALLAH TO BE ONE OF RISK MANAGEMENT. HE OPINED THAT HIZBALLAH WOULD PREFER TO ACHIEVE DOMINATION OF THE LEBANESE STATE THROUGH NON-VIOLENT MEANS. HE ALSO SUGGESTED THAT THE GOL AND HIZBALLAH ARE IN A "NARRATIVE" COMPETITION TO SEE WHO RECEIVES CREDIT FOR REBUILDING THE SOUTH FOLLOWING THE WAR.

EXCHANGE WITH THE RUSSIANS

¶11. (C) THE ISRAELI MISSION INFORMED USUN THAT IN THE BILATERAL MEETING WITH RUSSIAN PR CHURKIN, BAIDATZ PRESSED THE RUSSIANS ON ARMS SUPPLIES TO SYRIA, ESPECIALLY ANTI-TANK MISSILES. CHURKIN TOLD BAIDATZ THAT THE INFORMATION HE PROVIDED WAS SIGNIFICANT AND CREDIBLE AND HE WOULD PASS IT ON TO MOSCOW. WHEN MEETING WITH AMB WOLFF, BAIDATZ EXPLAINED THAT THE RUSSIANS HAD CONVEYED SYRIA'S EXPLANATION THAT THE SYRIAN MILITARY HAD RUSHED OUT OF LEBANON IN 2005 AND IN THEIR HASTE LEFT A FEW THINGS BEHIND WHICH ALLEGEDLY EXPLAINED THE PRESENCE OF RUSSIAN ARMS IN SYRIA. IN A SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATION WITH USUN, ISRAELI DPR SAID CHURKIN SEEMED LESS INTERESTED THAN OTHERS IN THE RUSSIAN MISSION WHO HAD RECEIVED THE BRIEFING.

¶12. (C) RUSSIAN DPR DOLGOV AND RUSSIAN MIDDLE EAST EXPERT GLEB DESYATNIKOV ATTENDED THE P-5 BRIEFING. WHILE NOT DISPUTING THE QUALITY OF THE INFORMATION, DOLGOV GENTLY CHIDED BAIDATZ FOR THE ISRAELI VIOLATIONS OF UNSCR 1701, NOTING THE "HELPFUL" IMAGERY BAIDATZ HAD USED IN HIS PRESENTATION WAS GAINED FROM OVERFLIGHTS THAT VIOLATED THE RESOLUTION AND LEBANESE SOVEREIGNTY. EVERYBODY, SAID DOLGOV, HAS TO IMPLEMENT 1701. (PICKING UP ON THAT THEME, ON MARCH 2 THE SYRIAN MISSION SENT A LETTER TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL "REJECTING RECENT ISRAELI ALLEGATIONS" THAT SYRIA IS SMUGGLING WEAPONS TO HIZBALLAH AND ACCUSING ISRAEL OF VIOLATING UNSCR 1701.)

¶13. (C) DOLGOV THEN LAUNCHED INTO THE RUSSIAN VIEW OF THE SITUATION IN LEBANON AND THE REGION. THERE ARE NOT ONLY HIZBALLAH ARMS IN SOUTHERN LEBANON AND SYRIA IS NOT THE ONLY SUPPLIER. SAAD HARIRI IS TRADING WITH JORDAN, WALID JUMBLATT IS TRADING WITH THE KURDS, THE MARONITES HAVE REACTIVATED THEIR MILITA, WEAPONS CACHES STOCKPILED AFTER THE CIVIL WAR BY THE SUNNIS AND CHRISTIANS HAVE BEEN REOPENED, AND SALAFI

SUNNI MILITIAS ARE MOVING INTO THE PALESTINIAN REFUGEE CAMPS AND ELSEWHERE. IN SUM, LEBANON IS FULL OF WEAPONS, AND PRESSURE ON HIZBALLAH COULD EASILY ESCALATE INTO CONFLAGRATION. RECALLING BAIDATZ' EARLIER DESCRIPTION OF THE UNHELPFUL IMPACT OF RUMORS THAT EITHER THE U.S. OR ISRAEL ARE PREPARING A MILITARY STRIKE AGAINST IRAN, DOLGOV ARGUED THAT THE DANGERS IN THE REGION ARE COMPLEX AND THE POLITICAL TENSIONS ARE HIGH. THEREFORE THERE IS A NEED TO MOVE CAUTIOUSLY AND MAINTAIN STABILITY.

¶14. (C) BAIDATZ CHALLENGED DOLGOV'S DEFINITION OF STABILITY.

CAN WE ASSUME HIZBALLAH IS A RATIONAL ACTOR, HE ASKED? THERE WAS STABILITY ALONG THE BLUE LINE UNTIL LAST SUMMER. THE POINT OF IMPLEMENTING UNSCR 1701 IS NOT TO RESTORE THAT SITUATION BUT TO GAIN NEW STABILITY. ADMITTEDLY, TO REACH THAT STAGE THERE MUST BE A PERIOD OF INSTABILITY. THE QUESTION IS WHAT WILL BE THE CHARACTER OF THE INEVITABLE INSTABILITY? SYRIA, ARGUED BAIDATZ, HAS A SPECIAL ROLE GIVEN ITS LENGTHY BORDER WITH LEBANON. THE SUPPLIERS OF AMMUNITION TO SYRIA HAVE MULTIPLE INTERESTS IN THE REGION, HE SAID. (COMMENT: BAIDATZ WAS TALKING ABOUT RUSSIA BUT DIPLOMATICALLY DECLINED TO EXPLICITLY NAME RUSSIA.) THESE SUPPLIERS SHOULD MAKE CLEAR TO SYRIA THAT THOSE INTERESTS ARE BEING COMPROMISED BY CONTINUING ARMS TRANSFERS TO LEBANON. WHILE THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY CAN PROVIDE TROOPS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO HELP THE GOL MONITOR THE BORDER WITH SYRIA, "PRESSURE ON THE PLAYERS INVOLVED IN THIS GAME" IS ALSO NECESSARY, BAIDATZ CONCLUDED.

COMMENT

¶15. (C) BAIDATZ' CREDIBLE AND SOPHISTICATED PRESENTATION UNDERScored THE FACT THAT HIZBALLAH REARMAMENT, WITH SYRIAN AND IRAN SUPPORT, IS AGGRAVATING THE LEBANESE POLITICAL STRUGGLE AND INCREASING VOLATILITY IN THE REGION. WE EXPECT TO SEE ELEMENTS OF HIS PRESENTATION IN THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S UPCOMING REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF

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UNSCR 1701, AND WILL WORK TO CAPITALIZE ON HIS BRIEFING DURING THE UPCOMING SECURITY COUNCIL CONSULTATIONS ON 1701, SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 27. THIS INFORMATION ALSO SUGGESTS A NEED TO CONSIDER WHAT NEXT STEPS ARE POSSIBLE TO DEAL WITH THE 1701 VIOLATIONS.

WOLFF